

# DNR NEWS

---

Indiana Department of Natural Resources  
402 W. Washington St. W255 B  
Indianapolis, IN 46204-2748  
Phone: (317) 232-4200

**For immediate release**

## Feds halt live fish shipments from Great Lakes

Interstate shipments of live fish from the Great Lakes region were restricted yesterday under a federal order aimed at halting the spread of a serious fish disease.

Viral hemorrhagic septicemia, or VHS, has historically been considered the most serious viral disease of trout and salmon raised in freshwater environments in Europe. Only recently has it emerged in freshwater fish in the Great Lakes region of the United States and Canada.

"VHS is not a threat to human health and has not yet been detected within our state," said Indiana State Veterinarian Bret D. Marsh, DVM, "however, it poses a significant economic risk to private aquaculture and we must do everything necessary to prevent its spread."

The federal action was taken by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). The federal order lists 37 species of fish that may not be transported live out of the eight Great Lakes states of Indiana, Illinois, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania and New York.

The federal order also prohibits importing these live fish from the Canadian provinces of Ontario and Quebec. The listed fish include numerous species of high commercial, recreational and ecological importance. The order, list of restricted species and other background information can be viewed at [www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/aqua/](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/aqua/).

The prohibition does not include dressed fish or fish eggs; however, private, state and federal fish hatcheries in the affected states as well as any other businesses that ship live fish across state lines can no longer transport the listed species.

The order, issued under authority of the Animal Health Protection Act, will remain in effect until APHIS establishes an interim rule that is expected to identify testing and health certification criteria for susceptible fish species. APHIS has indicated to state natural resource and veterinary officials that this rule will be in place by next spring.

VHS is a "reportable disease," which means it must be reported within 48 hours of diagnosis to the Indiana State Board of Animal Health (BOAH). Marsh said VHS is one of five such reportable fish diseases in Indiana and the world health organization for animals.

Since spring 2005, a number of fish die-offs attributed to VHS have occurred in Lake Ontario, Lake Erie and Lake St. Clair. The die-offs have affected muskellunge, smallmouth bass, yellow perch, bluegill,

crappie, gizzard shad, freshwater drum, round goby and other fish species. VHS has also been detected in samples of walleye, white bass and other species that were not part of a die-off.

"From Lake Michigan to the Ohio River, Indiana is blessed with some tremendous fisheries resources," Indiana Department of Natural Resources Director Kyle Hupfer said. "As already seen from die-offs in the lower Great Lakes, VHS is a serious threat to wild fish stocks and the sport and commercial fisheries that depend upon them.

"If additional disease monitoring and testing is what will help safeguard these resources, we stand prepared to do so."

Experts are unsure how the virus was transferred to the Great Lakes or how long the disease has been there. One theory is that VHS may have mutated from a marine form and become newly pathogenic to freshwater fish.

-30-

**Media Contact:** Marty Benson, senior communications specialist, (317) 233-3853, cell (317) 696-9812.